

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 IO-11 FEA-01 AGR-05 CEA-01

CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FRB-03 H-02 INR-07

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CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-04 ITC-01 TRSE-00 USIA-06 PRS-01

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P R 122054Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4025

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

AMCONSUL CALI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 2703

EO: 11652: GDS

TAGS: FINS ETRD EEWT PINT PFOR OCON SNAR

SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. STUDENT DISORDERS CONTINUED, AS IS NORMAL AT THIS SEASON. THE FAILURE OF CTC PRESIDENT MARCADO'S KIDNAPPERS TO RELEASE HIM WAS MORE WORRISOME. PRESIDENT LOPEZ CALLED FOR TRADE BASED ON COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND ALSO PROPOSED A NEW MULTINATIONAL SUGAR TREATY. THE USSR HAS OFFERED YAK-40 AIRCRAFT AND PATROL VESSELS ON TERMS VERY FAVORABLE TO THE GOC. THE CONSERVATIVES ATTEMPTED TO WHIP LIFE INTO THEIR CAMPAIGN FOR THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS. GENERAL TORRIJOS OF PANAMA PAID ANOTHER SUDDEN VISIT TO COLOMBIA. REPRESENTATIVES OF LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN SUGAR EXPORTING COUNTRIES MET IN CALI. A U.S.-GOC SPONSORED MEDIA-NARCOTICS SEMINAR PROMISED TO HEIGHTEN COLOMBIAN AWARENESS OF THE DRUG PROBLEM. END SUMMARY

2. PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS CONTINUE. JOSE MERCADO, PRESIDENT OF
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THE CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CTC), REMAINS IN THE HANDS

OF M-19 TERRORISTS (BOGOTA 2434) DESPITE EARLIER INDICATIONS THAT HE MIGHT SOON BE RELEASED. NEARLY FIVE THOUSAND STUDENTS ATTEMPTED TO MARCH THROUGH BOGOTA TO PROTEST THE HIGH COST OF LIVING AND THE DETENTION OF STUDENTS IN MEDELLIN. POLICE FORCED STUDENTS BACK ON TO THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS WHERE THEY SUBSEQUENTLY BROKE WINDOWS AND BURNED ONE CAR. IN TUNJA, 10 PEOPLE WERE WOUNDED AND 20 ARRESTED IN STUDENT RIOTING. THE MELEE BEGAN WITH A STUDENT-SPONSORED MOCK FUNERAL FOR THE STUDENT SLAIN DURING THE DISTURBANCES IN MEDELLIN. IN THE LATTER CITY POLICE ARRESTED 34 FACULTY MEMBERS AND 25 STUDENTS WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO SPARK A CONFRONTATION. THE POPULAR LIBERATION ARMY (EPL) OCCUPIED A WORK SITE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CORDOBA FOR 24 HOURS AND STOLE TOOLS AND FOOD.

3. LOPEZ SPEAKS OUT ON TRADE. AT THE CALI SUGAR CONFERENCE (SEE PARA 7), PRESIDENT LOPEZ CALLED FOR FURTHERANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE IN TRADE BETWEEN THE DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, A THEME RAISED BY FONMIN LIEVANO DURING THE SECRETARY'S RECENT VISIT (BOGOTA A-16). LOPEZ ALSO PROPOSED A MULTINATIONAL SUGAR TREATY BASED ON COMMITMENTS BY PRODUCING COUNTRIES TO PROVIDE A REGULAR SUPPLY OF SUGAR IN EXCHANGE FOR COMMITMENTS BY CONSUMING COUNTRIES TO MAINTAIN REASONABLE LEVELS OF BASE PRICES. (BOGOTA 2659)

4. SOVIET OFFER TO SELL MILITARY EQUIPMENT. A COLOMBIAN TRADE DELEGATION TO THE SOVIET UNION IN DECEMBER 1975 WAS OFFERED YAK-40 AIRCRAFT AND FAST COASTAL PATROL VESSELS ON VERY FAVORABLE TERMS (BOGOTA 2457). BOTH WOULD FILL VITAL NEEDS OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT. THE PATROL VESSELS WOULD BE USED FOR COASTAL PATROL AND INTERDICTION AND THE TAK-40 AIRCRAFT FOR TECHNICAL INSPECTION OF NAVIGATIONAL AIDS. COLOMBIAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN SHOPPING FOR BOTH THE SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT ON A WORLD-WIDE BASIS BUT WITH PREFERENCE FOR U.S. EQUIPMENT. SURPLUS U.S. AIRCRAFT (C-47'S) HAVE BEEN OFFERED AND WILL PROBABLY BE ACCEPTED FOR USE BY SATENA. AERO-CIVIL IS STILL STUDYING THE YAK-40 AND WILL PROBABLY ACCEPT ONE ON A TEST BASIS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE COLOMBIAN NAVY IS STILL HOPING TO PROCURE USED U.S. EQUIPMENT BUT SOVIET TERMS FOR ITS NAVAL VESSELS ARE REPORTEDLY SO FAVORABLE THAT THEY WILL BE HARD TO REFUSE.

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5. CONSERVATIVES MAKE ELECTION PUSH. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY HAS ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR HEAVY CAMPAIGNING THIS WEEK IN WESTERN COLOMBIA WITH FORMER PRESIDENTS OSPINA AND PASTRANA AND 1974 CANDIDATE ALVARO GOMEZ TAKING THE STUMP FOR LOCAL CANDIDATES. UNLIKE THE LIBERAL PARTY, WHERE SEVERAL GROUPS ARE ATTEMPTING TO USE THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS AS STEPPING STONES FOR THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY HAS NO COMPELLING INTRA-PARTY COMPETITION TO BRING OUT THE VOTE. NO CONSERVATIVE LEADER IS

FIGHTING FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. (THERE ARE, IN FACT, A NUMBER OF PARTY LEADERS WHO DOUBT IF THE PARTY WILL FIELD A 1978 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.) A 35-40 PERCENT SHOWING IN THE VOTING ON APRIL 18 FOR MUNICIPAL AND DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLIES WOULD REVITALIZE THE BADLY DEMORALIZED PARTY AND MAKE THE 1978 NOMINATION MORE ATTRACTIVE. AT PRESENT, HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE TO INDICATE SUCH AN IMPROVEMENT IN CONSERVATIVE FORTUNES.

6. GENERAL TORRIJOS IN CALI. PANAMA'S GENERAL TORRIJOS SPENT FIVE HOURS IN CALI MARCH 9 ATTENDING A SUGAR EXPORTERS MEETING AND CONVERSING WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ (BOGOTA 2556). TORRIJOS SAID THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT WAS TO REVIEW WITH LOPEZ THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING OF THE LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENTS IN PANAMA NEXT JUNE 21. NO COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED FOLLOWING THE MEETING.

7. SUGAR MEETING OPENS. THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE GROUP OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SUGAR EXPORTING COUNTRIES (CEPLACEA) OPENED IN CALI ON MARCH 7. DELEGATES FROM 23 COUNTRIES ARE SCHEDULED TO RATIFY THE STATUTES OF THE ORGANIZATION, SEEK AGREEMENT ON A COORDINATED POLICY IN PREPARATION FOR ISA MEETINGS LATER THIS YEAR, AND FORMALIZE A PROGRAM FOR THE INTERCHANGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION.

8. MEDIA-NARCOTICS SEMINAR. THE EMBASSY AND THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE CO-SPONSORED A WEEKEND SEMINAR ON THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA AND THE DRUG PROBLEM. SEVENTY-ONE PARTICIPANTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND PRIVATE SECTOR MET TO PLAN PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST DRUGS. THE SEMINAR RECEIVED WIDE NATIONAL PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION COVERAGE.
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